

LEARNING TO BE A SCHOOLMASTER

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LEARNING TO BE A SCHOOLMASTER

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FOREWORD

In “Learning to be a Schoolmaster” the author has related some of his personal experiences, which he trusts will be suggestive to those who are just entering the teaching profession.

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ENTERING THE TEACHING PROFESSION

LITTLE did I think, during my college days, that I should ever become a teacher. It would have made me unpopular to have said so, even if I had had any designs in that direction. My college mates, who were planning to be lawyers, engineers, or commercial men of prominence, considered teaching creditable only as a "fill in job." I joined them in their happy aspirations and tried to think I was preparing for something. Just what that "something" was, I was unable to say.

Finally the day of graduation arrived. I was ready to go out into the world with a college diploma, but was unprepared for a definite position. My false aspirations had failed, and I was looking hopelessly about for something to do that would save my pride. I must not accept just a mere job, and to escape that humiliation I became a teacher. It certainly was not a very creditable manner for a young man to enter a profession, to say nothing of the doubtful compliment of such an entry to the teaching profession. Such a confession,

however, could be made by many of my associates of fifteen years ago.

The situation that confronted me after deciding to become a teacher *temporarily*, and two ways of meeting it, can be illustrated by the experiences of two young men who entered the teaching profession under similar conditions.

A few years ago I made a trip to a neighboring state to visit a friend who was engaged in farming. On a sunny July morning I arrived in an enterprising village a few miles from his home. While sitting on the porch of the hotel waiting for my friend, I met a man whom I had known years before. He recognized me. After stating that he was president of the local board of education, he invited me to go out to their school building, which was being remodeled.

One of the first rooms that we visited was the study hall. We found the janitor busily engaged in arranging the seats. He said he didn't know just which way the desks should face, as no one had told him, but he remembered that the pupils needed plenty of light, so he was facing the desks toward the side of the room which had the most windows.

We then went to a room set apart for manual training work. There was one bench in evidence and Mr. —— told me that the board had not

decided on the kind of benches or tools to buy, as the superintendent had not said in what grades the manual training work would be offered. "In fact," he said, "the superintendent forgot to tell us anything about the building equipment before he left for his vacation."

We next visited a room which, he explained, might be used for a gymnasium; but, since the superintendent had made no plans for using it, they were leaving it unfinished.

We looked through some of the grade rooms which had been in use for years. The seating was in bad condition, as little or no care had been taken to keep the proper distance between the desks and the seats. Some of the third grade seats were out of alignment at least four inches. I pointed out the irregular distances between the seats and the desks and asked my guide if it were due to the different sizes of the children. He said, "I think so." I made no comment, as remarks were unnecessary. As we left the building he said, "I guess our superintendent is more interested in something else than he is in his job here." This statement proved true.

Now for the second young man I have in mind. At one time it was customary for me to represent the state superintendent's office at county school board meetings that were held

during the summer months in the different parts of one of the leading middle western states. On this particular trip, I was forced to stop over in a small town for about two hours, in order to make connection with the train that would take me to my destination. I was now really interested in education and thought it would be well to visit the school building. The first thing to attract my attention was the well-kept lawn, with flower beds along the walk that led from the street to the building. This was somewhat unusual for a school yard. I noticed that the front door was open, and entered the building.

After looking through the well-kept lower rooms, I ascended the stairs to see the high school portion of the building, which contained eight rooms. Upon reaching the second story landing, I heard some hammering in one of the rooms and proceeded to locate it. I soon found myself confronted by a young man about twenty-five years of age, whose face gave the expression of accomplishment. He enthusiastically told me that he was interested in the agricultural conditions in the surrounding districts, and was preparing boxes and equipment to offer a course in agriculture to the boys in and out of school who might wish to elect it. "The course," he said, "will be offered outside of the regular

school hours, at a time that will be best suited to those who may wish to attend. I hope to make it an evening class, and that the fathers may also become interested." He told me about the short summer course he had taken at the state agricultural school and the help that he expected to get from the dean through booklets and suggestive lessons.

He then invited me to go through the rooms of the building. When we reached the fifth and sixth grade room he said, "In this room I have corrected a condition that caused the failure of one or more teachers. When I was elected here a year ago, the president of the board told me they had been unfortunate for years in securing a satisfactory fifth and sixth grade teacher. The teachers had all failed because they were unable to maintain good order. I was asked to secure a teacher for the room, which I did, after careful investigation. It was less than three weeks, however, after the semester started, when the restlessness of the pupils became apparent. I was at a loss to know the source of the trouble until a bulletin from the state superintendent's office reached me, which gave suggestions as to the care and equipment of school grounds and buildings. I noticed in this bulletin that the correct distance between No. 3 seats is twelve

inches. I thought immediately of our troublesome fifth and sixth grade room. It took me but a few moments to discover that the distances between the seats in this room ranged from twelve to fifteen inches. I observed how the pupils were forced to sit on the edges of the seats in order to work at the desks and soon became tired and restless. The desks were changed immediately and the "teacher problem" in this room was solved. That experience was a lesson to me, and since then I have given much time and attention to making the building attractive and comfortable for the teachers and pupils." It was quite evident, as we went from room to room, that he had put the lesson into practice.

I shall never forget that young man. Three years later he was at the head of one of the largest consolidated high schools in the state, and when I met him at the meeting of the Department of Superintendence in Detroit in 1916 he told me that he had recently been appointed to take charge of one of the state agricultural schools.

One man had made school teaching a *job*; the other had made it a *profession*.

GETTING A POSITION

Many young men and women enter the educational field without giving due consideration to the type of work they are best fitted to do. A large percentage of the teacher failures belongs to this class. I am often interviewed by candidates who are seeking positions. When I ask them the kind of work they can do the best, I occasionally receive the reply, "In what grades do you have the greatest number of openings?" Others will say, "I am prepared to teach any of the grades. I have no preference, for I am as good in one as I am in another." In the case of some candidates the last statement is likely to be true.

Boards of education usually grade applicants on three main points: personality, preparation, experience. The first two, every candidate who has completed a normal school or college course possesses to a greater or less degree. The third must be gained by actual work in teaching.

A pleasing yet forceful personality is one of the leading factors in any teacher's success and it should be cultivated to the greatest possible degree. I feel that I was influenced in a large

measure to complete my high school education by the attractive personality of the principal of our village school. His predecessor by harsh and dictatorial discipline had driven many boys out of school, and I came near being one of them. I found my ideal in the principal who succeeded him; and when I meet the inspirational teacher—the teacher with a personality that attracts young people—I can see the picture of that splendid young man who gave me the first real desire for an education.

A teacher should always be desirous of making a good personal impression, yet I have seen young women seeking positions waiting at the big counter in the superintendent's office who were dressed more suitably for a social function than for a business call. Not long ago we were greatly in need of a commercial teacher. A young woman of otherwise good qualifications made application. Her attire was somewhat extreme and we decided it would be well to have her visit the principal of the school who needed the teacher. He reported that he could not use a teacher to instruct young men and women in commercial work who lacked one of the first requisites of business—"dress sense."

The time is rapidly drawing to a close when mediocre preparation will be accepted in the

field of education. The teacher for elementary or high school work must first secure a good general education. Specializing in one or more subjects based upon a fragmentary educational foundation is the cause of many failures in the teaching profession. One of the chief weaknesses of such teachers has usually been found to be in English. In reading applications I have often noticed statements of this character given by one of the references: "Mr. —— is good in his particular subject, but his use of English is so bad that I cannot recommend him for a position where he comes in contact daily with young people." "I can recommend Miss —— for a position, as for example penmanship teaching, but that is the only thing she can do as her educational vision is very limited."

After a teacher has secured adequate general education and finds his "bent," he should then give particular attention and study to his chosen field. A teacher, however, should never cease to utilize every opportunity of broadening his general education. To do so means a narrowing of his viewpoint and the power of associating his special subject with the larger field of education.

In filling out application blanks teachers are sometimes careless in giving the information requested. Failure to do this often results in

obtaining little or no consideration for the position desired. The references named should be responsible persons who know of the applicant's real qualifications and teaching work. It is always well for an applicant to secure the permission of the people chosen as references before using their names. A superintendent is much more likely to understand a teacher's motive for applying elsewhere if he has been interviewed. When the motive is understood, he is in a better position to serve the applicant as well as the officials to whom the applicant has applied. The large majority of superintendents encourage their teachers to feel that they want them to improve professionally and are ready to assist them in doing so.

Not long ago a young man came to see me about a promotion. I asked him in what line of work he was best fitted for advancement. He said he didn't know, but he wanted the job that paid the most money.

It was interesting to note his idea of the teaching profession as contrasted with that of a young woman who had interviewed me a short time before concerning a possible opening in one of the high schools. She had taught for two years and realized the need of further specialization in her chosen field. To obtain this training, she

had spent a year's time and her savings in taking post-graduate work. I was interested in the frank statement that she gave concerning her teaching experience, which she confessed had been very ordinary in character. It was also pleasing to note the feeling of gratitude she had for those who had encouraged her to take the post-graduate training.

We had no opening for her at that time, but I took her name and address in order that she might be considered for vacancies that might occur later. It so happened that a few days later a superintendent from a near-by town called to see me, and stated his need of a high school teacher who could teach mathematics, English, and history. It was quite a range of work, but I thought of my visitor of a few days before and made an appointment for her to meet this superintendent. After the interview was over, she came in with tears in her eyes, to tell me that she had declined the offer. She said she was financially much in need of a position, but she could not again go into a classroom to teach work in a department that she was ill prepared to handle. A short time later one of our teachers resigned. The place was given to this young woman. She has proved to be one of our best classroom teachers, and has been an inspiration

to the other instructors in her department. Self-examination and study had caused her to realize the real strength, as well as the limitations, of her teaching power, and she made the most of it.

BEFORE SCHOOL OPENS AFTER GETTING THE FIRST SUPERINTENDENCY

Four years as a high school teacher had given me an opportunity to study the educational field. During that time I had made a practice of attending county, sectional, state, and, whenever possible, national teachers' meetings, so that I might become acquainted with current school problems and with the men and women who were educational leaders.

After considering carefully my possible qualifications for administrative work, I decided that to secure the superintendency of schools in a small town was the proper educational step for me to take. By an application through regular channels I succeeded in being elected to the coveted position and thereby gained what I was seeking—administrative opportunity.

As the election had been given me without a personal application, I decided to invest eighteen dollars in a trip to my new field of labor during the spring vacation, so that I might get acquainted with the general school situation. The first important discovery that I made was that

the superintendent who was leaving had the ill will of a part of the community, but still had the loyal support of the teachers. My problem was to get his coöperation so that I could enter the work with as little friction as possible, and to obtain general knowledge of his plans of school administration. Both these factors were very essential to a succeeding superintendent. He gave me the coöperation and information most willingly—a service which I have never ceased to appreciate.

I met the members of the board as individuals and was received very cordially by them. No doubt they were interested in seeing me and appreciated the interest I showed in getting acquainted with the work in advance.

We moved to the town during the middle of August. As soon as we became settled, my attention was turned to the work of the new position. I had already given a close study to the grade and high school programs and course of study. Copies of the different courses of study offered in well-organized neighboring schools were also obtained in order that I might get a broader view of the school conditions in that section of the state.

Ten days before the opening of school I placed a notice in the town paper inviting all the high school pupils who had attended school the year

before to call at the building and see me. A considerable number responded to this request, and through these pupils I received a large amount of valuable information.

One of my first tasks was to prepare a high school program which would permit the pupils to carry the work that they should pursue in accordance with their chosen courses of study. We had only three teachers for the high school, including myself, which narrowed the range of subjects that might be offered each semester. Before attempting to make a program I compiled a list of names of all the pupils who had attended high school the year before, with the lists of the subjects each pupil had completed. I then made a statement of the subjects that each pupil should take during the ensuing year. This gave the necessary information for making a program. When school opened each pupil was given a slip of paper showing the credits he had made to date and the subjects for which he was to register. By checking carefully, all conflicts were eliminated and the first day of instruction went off without delay or friction. This was worth much to the school and to me. Not all my time, however, was given to the making of a high school program. I prepared a tentative time schedule for the subjects in the

elementary grades. This schedule, with a few minor changes, was afterward adopted by the grade teachers.

The business side of the school was especially interesting to me. I believed then, and still believe, that a successful superintendent must be a close student of school costs. He must know and keep constantly in mind the amount of money available for school expenses and be able to recommend how that money can be expended to the best advantage. Too often the superintendent, by the nature of his tenure, is forced to plan only for the one year—a policy that is wasteful to the district and harmful to the general efficiency of the school. In order to secure a comprehensive idea of the school supplies on hand and what would be needed, I asked the janitor to assist me in making a complete check of all the books and supplies in the building. This work proved very helpful to me later and was alone worth the two extra weeks I had given to my new position.

With the school program made, supplies checked, and a good preliminary acquaintance with the board members and school conditions, I left the building on Friday evening preceding the opening of school feeling *ready* for the year's work to begin.

TEACHERS' MEETINGS

A teacher said to me recently, "I wish Mr. —— had remained at A —— as superintendent. We always had splendid teachers' meetings when he was with us." This comment interested me and I asked her the character of the meetings. She replied, "We had regular sectional meetings once a month and a general teachers' meeting every six weeks. The sectional meetings were for the purpose of giving and getting definite suggestions that would be helpful to the teachers of each individual group. The general meeting was always a happy gathering. Mr. —— would make his message cheerful and inspirational and we left those meetings *with a spirit of wanting to do more than we had ever done before.*" What this young woman said is true. Teachers want meetings that give something *tangible* and *definite* to assist them in their work.

The first teachers' meeting that I ever conducted was held about a library table where we could all look at one another and get the feeling of fellowship. A few definite points that the teachers needed to know on the *first day* of school were prepared and everything else was

left for subsequent meetings. It was my business to help the teachers get started and lighten a part of their regular work, rather than to add to their burden things unnecessary at that time.

One of the best talks I ever heard delivered by a superintendent was given to the new teachers a few years ago at the opening of the school year. He gave the teachers a hearty and sincere welcome and told them nothing about what their duties were to be. He advised them to *say but little* at first about what they had done at their former places, but urged them to “*listen* and to *learn our ways* and then, with that knowledge in mind, to help by suggestions to make our schools better.” How very differently is such a welcome received by teachers from that given by a superintendent who feels that he must place before the teachers, at the first meeting, an outline in detail of what is expected throughout the year!

The latter plan was unfortunately followed by a superintendent of my acquaintance. He went to his new position in ample time to get the school conditions well in hand and everything boded well for his future. His first teachers' meeting, however, ruined his chances of succeeding in that place. As one teacher reported, “He talked about everything in the educational catalog that had nothing to do with the opening

weeks of school, and the teachers left the meeting with an adverse opinion concerning him that he was unable to change." The meetings he held throughout the year were of the same rambling type. The result was that he failed to secure the coöperation of his teachers and was asked to resign at the close of the year. This is an example of one who knew much—talked much—but gave little assistance of any constructive value to his teachers.

As a superintendent I always found it profitable, after the school year was well started, to hold sectional meetings for teachers of the lower grades, intermediate grades, grammar grades, and high school. Each section met every two weeks about a table and took up definite topics of the teachers' own choosing. The result was that our course of study and the methods of work were constantly being improved *and the teachers were causing the improvement*. A general meeting for all the teachers was held from time to time when a good speaker could be secured or when I wished to present a phase of school work that should be understood by all.

During the past year a series of meetings of the English teachers in one of our high schools demonstrated what can be accomplished if the topics for discussion are of a concrete nature.

The teaching of the English classics has been somewhat varied in plan and the results accomplished have not always been satisfactory. The English teachers realized this and suggested that we make the classics the subject of professional study for the year. The classics selected were: *Lady of the Lake*, *Ivanhoe*, *Old Testament Stories*, *Silas Marner*, *Idylls of the King*, *Birds and Bees*, *Clive and Hastings*, and *Emerson's Essays*.

A teacher was chosen to discuss each of the classics according to the following outline:

1. Spend thirty minutes in explaining the methods used and the results expected in the teaching of the classic.
2. Provide a written outline which gives the main points a teacher should keep in mind in teaching the classic, copies of the outline to be provided for distribution at the time of the meeting.
3. Be prepared to make a typical assignment of a lesson in teaching the classic.
4. State where supplementary material can be obtained to aid in teaching the classic.
5. Answer questions.

At the conclusion of the year the general expression of the English teachers was that the meetings held were among the most profitable

professional gatherings that they had ever attended. The same definite plan could well be followed with other subjects.

There is still another type of meeting of even greater importance to the superintendent and teachers. That meeting is the personal talk that the superintendent should have with each teacher, as often as possible, to enable him to learn how her work is getting on and the difficulties she is meeting, and to welcome any suggestions she has to make. Such talks will give a superintendent a key to the real school situation, and the teacher will appreciate his close, personal interest as shown by his suggestions and encouragement.

MEETING WITH THE SCHOOL BOARD

A few days previous to the opening of school at ———, a member of the school board dropped in one morning to see me. In the course of the conversation he said that the board would meet the second evening after the opening of school, and invited me to be present, if I cared to come. I thanked him for the invitation and assured him that I should be glad to attend the meeting.

At the teachers' meeting on the Saturday before the school opened, I gave each teacher a blank, and asked for a report at the close of the first day of school, somewhat as follows:

1. Number of pupils enrolled.
2. Number of boys and number of girls and their respective ages.
3. Number of pupils who were attending school for the first time.
4. Supplies, if any, that were needed immediately.

From this information, which was easily obtained by the teachers, I compiled a definite report which showed the school attendance the first day compared with the opening days of the

two previous years; the grades having largest number of retarded pupils; and the extra supplies that would soon be needed. The report concluded with a brief statement of my appreciation of the hearty coöperation that I had received from the teachers and pupils. I wrote the report very carefully and placed it in my pocket, hoping that it might be presented at the board meeting.

The first board meeting meant much to me, for I was desirous of having the members feel that the success of the school depended very largely upon having the administrative head take an active part in the deliberations. I was present promptly at eight o'clock, the time set for the meeting, and the gentleman who had invited me explained to the other members how I happened to be present. Before the close of the meeting, the president of the board asked how I liked the place and how many I had found it necessary to "strap" the first day. I replied that I was well pleased with the school conditions, and that if there were no objection I would like to read a short report that might be of some interest to the board. There was no objection and I read the report. At the conclusion of the reading, one member of the board said, "By Jimminy, I have been on this board for seven years and that is the

first time I have ever heard a report like that. I move, Mr. Chairman, that we thank the superintendent for bringing in the report, that we file it with the secretary, and that we extend a standing invitation to him to attend all our meetings.” The vote in favor of the motion was unanimous. I went home that evening feeling that I had been well repaid for the time spent in compiling the report.

From that time on I made a regular monthly report at the board meetings, which resulted in the extension of my authority. I was soon permitted to order supplies when needed, if the requisitions were approved by the secretary of the board. This was a great help to the school. It saved much delay, and we always knew what we could get and when we could expect it. The teachers often spoke of how much more definitely they could plan their work. Great care was exercised to purchase only such supplies as were needed, and we turned in many of the worn-out books as partial payment for new texts. Hence, at the end of the year the cost of school supplies had been cut nearly in half as compared with that of the previous year. It was a matter of pleasure to have the board realize that a superintendent might be a business man as well as an educator.

The next extension of authority was in regard to the employment of teachers. It had been the general policy of the board to engage and discharge teachers without consulting the superintendent. I anticipated this by making, at the end of the fourth month, a report as to the general efficiency of the teachers. Not a word was written in the report that *the individual teacher concerned did not know*. The members of the board expressed themselves as being much pleased with the teacher report idea and I was told that I would be asked to recommend the teachers when the time came for their election. This confidence of the board was a great inspiration to me, and helped me more than anything else to decide that I would remain a schoolmaster.

My experience with the board in another community is equally suggestive.

During the five years previous to my superintendency at this place, the board had voted against the introduction of manual training each time it came up for discussion. I was interested in having manual training introduced, but before making a formal request of the board, I decided to give the subject a very careful study. I spent a number of Saturdays going from town to town to inspect the manual training equipment and courses of study. At that time, manual training

was very much in the experimental stage, and I found something new at each place. After settling upon the plan that I considered best suited to our accommodations, I arranged to have an evening meeting of the parents at the school building where an exhibit of the regular school work was displayed in each room. During the evening a talk was given on the topic of manual training by a neighboring superintendent, who was especially well qualified to discuss the subject. I wanted to create a public sentiment in favor of manual training before asking the board to introduce it into the school system.

At the next regular board meeting I presented a definite, written plan for the introduction of manual training, stating the space in the building for it, the grades that would be given the work, the number of times per week that it would be offered, and the cost of the benches and tools. Without a moment's hesitation, the leading member of the board said, "I have objected to the introduction of manual training for five years, not because I was opposed to the subject but owing to the fact we never had a report made to us as to its cost, where it could be placed in the building, or the grades in which it would be offered. I move that the recommendation be adopted and the material purchased as desig-

nated in the report.” The motion was adopted without a dissenting vote.

I have had many other experiences with school boards similar to those cited above. School boards have not always purchased everything that I have requested, but I have found in the vast majority of cases that if the board has faith in the superintendent and feels that he *knows what he wants*, and *what he will do with it after he gets it*, he will not have much difficulty in obtaining what the school really needs. Too many superintendents go to board meetings with no definite report as to what is being done in the schools or what is really needed to make them efficient. This inability or failure to assume leadership causes the board to lose confidence in the superintendent, and soon reacts detrimentally upon the school system.

SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

Not long ago a teacher asked me in what manner a person with executive ability has the best opportunity of showing it. I replied, "Ask your principal for the privilege of taking charge of some school activity." I dare say more principals and superintendents have been found through their ability to handle student activities than in any other way. Too often teachers who are really capable of doing executive work object to this extra duty and thereby miss the opportunity of demonstrating their real capacity for leadership. They also lose at the same time one of the most fruitful and pleasant experiences in school work. I could give many illustrations of teachers who have "found themselves" through being associated with student enterprises.

Some superintendents feel that student activities are a waste of time, and in a measure this is likely to be true unless the activities are carefully supervised.

In one of the towns where I was superintendent, the school had had no student activities during the preceding year except football and

baseball. The teams had been coached by an outsider who was intensely interested in having a winning team but cared little for the value of athletics to the boys or to the school. With this condition in mind, I called the boys together and asked them how it would appeal to them if we formed an athletic association and had rules governing athletics similar to those followed in the larger towns in that vicinity. The boys agreed to the plan and elected a committee to prepare a set of rules that were to be submitted to them for approval. After a couple of meetings, the committee outlined the rules in accordance with the general high school athletic regulations, and they were formally adopted.

The results of the formation of the association were threefold: First, good scholarship and deportment were required of all pupils who participated in athletics. Second, no money could be expended except with the approval of the faculty adviser. Third, the coaching of all athletic teams was placed under the direction of the superintendent. The last point did not necessarily eliminate the assistance that might be secured from outside coaches, provided they were made directly responsible to the school.

The new plan for athletics worked splendidly with the exception of a few vigorous protests

from boys who were debarred from playing on account of poor scholarship. Sufficient money was saved during the year to pay back the amount that had been advanced for athletic supplies and we were able to complete equipments for first and second football teams for the succeeding fall. The boys were proud of this accomplishment and when I occasionally hear from some of them, they often remark, "*We* put —— on the map in athletics."

The second activity needed was a "literary society." There had been no such organization in the school for five years. The janitor told me that the last literary society had ended in a "rough-house" and he hoped that was the end of it for all time. He further declared he was not in favor of coming to the building in the evening. I told him that we would attend to the opening and closing of the building if we started the organization, and that I hoped we could get along without any rough-housing.

The pupils in —— had little or no opportunity for group evening entertainment and heartily welcomed the suggestion of forming a literary society. Officers were elected with the understanding that they would be given full charge of the organization, subject to the regulations of the faculty adviser.

Meetings were held twice a month on Friday evenings at 7:30. No program was arranged that required more than one and a half hours' time. It usually consisted of a debate, music, school news, and readings. The school auditorium held about 150 people and on many occasions the room would be crowded in order to accommodate those who wished to attend. Many of the parents made it an opportunity for meeting the teachers. It might be mentioned that the janitor never missed a meeting and was one of the most interested listeners.

After getting the athletic association and literary society organized, I interviewed the editors of the two local papers relative to getting some space for school news. Both were glad to publish any information concerning the school that I might wish to furnish. Student editors were then elected for the different high school classes and the upper grade rooms. The news items were given to me on Wednesday of each week to be edited and sent to the papers. The school news had its immediate effect, and greater interest was taken in the school by the pupils and patrons. The literary programs which appeared in the papers every two weeks gave much prominence to that activity. The newspaper publishers were not slow to see the effect the

school news had in increasing their subscriptions, so we all had reason to be pleased with the results of the enterprise.

There are many other valuable school organizations that have not been mentioned. The number of activities should depend largely on the size of the school. The real purpose and local value of each activity should be given careful consideration before it is organized. Much harm can come from poorly supervised student enterprises or from a student organization that is permitted to take more of the time of pupils and teachers than is justified. The time for the preparation of plays should be limited and the work should be distributed among as many pupils as possible. The centering of effort on one debating team or on a first athletic team may help, or the showing that a school will make against competitors (although I doubt it), but such a plan will not develop the power and training within the school that should be desired.

I quote the following from a report of a Seattle high school principal regarding extra-curricular activities:

“The extra-curricular activities in a high school can be divided into two classes, the minor and the major activities. The minor activities

are such as arise out of a desire to vitalize certain studies; the Science Club, the Short Story Club, the French Club are illustrations. For the most part these meet only once or twice a month for an afternoon program in which students who are interested participate themselves or occasionally invite some outsider to take part. Teachers desiring to stimulate greater interest in their specialties are usually enthusiastic supporters of such clubs. The programs are informal, held after school and requiring comparatively little effort on the part of the teachers; and those teachers who are alive to their work welcome the opportunities which these small clubs offer in the way of stimulating interest and adding zest to studies.

“Furthermore, these informal gatherings afford teachers and students an opportunity to meet outside the classroom and become better acquainted, which is always an important factor in successful school work. No teacher worthy of the name is averse to such organizations. It is difficult to find a single objectionable feature in them. Of course, they require some after-school time occasionally, and some planning on the part of the responsible adviser. No conscientious teacher begrudges this extra time and effort and every enterprising teacher finds enough in them to compensate him liberally for his efforts.

“The major activities such as class organizations, glee clubs, dramatic clubs, athletic associations, boys’ and girls’ clubs, the school paper, the Senior Ball, the Junior Prom, and the inter-school debates offer more problems in the nature of care. They take in larger groups, are more formal or more pretentious, and demand a larger amount of time from teachers directing them. Not only that, but they also require a larger organizing capacity on the part of the advisers. Not all teachers can assume sponsorship for such organizations.

“These activities are to the school what the Fourth of July parade, the Elks’ big-brother picnic, and the Wayfarer are to the city. A city could get along without these activities and save itself a deal of hard work and expense. But enterprising men consider them worth ten times the effort and expense to the community as a whole. Some undesirable features follow in the wake of all these large city enterprises. Streets become congested, the police have to do double duty; there may be some accidents, some thefts, some people overworked. But in life unpleasant things are organically connected with the pleasant and if you would have the one you must have at least some of the other.

“In like manner the major school activities

benefit the entire school. They have the effect of welding the large school into something like a homogeneous unit. They develop school pride and school interest. A large school can no more get along without these and be a live institution than can a church without its young peoples' societies and programs, its men's club suppers, and its ladies' aid societies and be a live church organization.

"But aside from welding the school into a unit of effort and purpose, these organizations, like the minor activities, serve to socialize the institution, to bring pupils and teachers together in a way that the classroom does not afford, to 'bring out' students, to discover latent talents, and to spur students on to a maximum standard of excellence.

"Aside from their socializing value, these organizations have an ethical purpose. Group interests are developed through them which teach pupils to work together for a common end. School enthusiasm and loyalty are developed which broaden in later years to interest in and loyalty to community and nation.

"Teachers have not introduced these activities as a rule. They came in response to a recognized need. No more can teachers put them out. They can, however, help to direct them into

proper channels, supervise them, and keep them within proper bounds, all of which is a task worthy of a real teacher. Those instructors who can recall the turbulent days of the secret societies and cliques, of the unsupervised and unmanaged athletics, have no doubt that progress has been made, and are ready to help to keep up the good work.

“The objectionable features of the major activities are naturally more pronounced. It is easy to make too much of such activities, to make them too pretentious, to consume too much time with them so that they sometimes interfere with the curricular work of the school. As a rule principals and teachers strive to keep these activities within reasonable bounds. Sometimes they find themselves involved in a bigger undertaking than they planned for. However, unbounded American enthusiasm is in no small measure to blame for the overdoing of some of these activities.

“Organized athletics in all schools are here to stay. In fact a much larger participation is noticeable each year. Even grammar schools, churches, business houses, and other corporations have their teams. Athletics, however, beneficial as they are, can be overdone and in some respects are being overdone. So with all

the other extra-curricular activities. They must be properly directed and sanely managed. This sane management and proper direction must be encouraged by the public as a whole.

“Necessarily, too, such activities as have proved their worth will have to be provided for by the employment of teachers who are capable of handling them and wherever they are a large drain on the adviser’s time and effort, that, too, must be taken care of. Improvements and adjustments in looking after these activities are sure to come as the result of increased experience. That there is much room for improvement along these lines no one doubts. Let those who have experience and can offer constructive suggestions do so freely. Their suggestions will be gladly received, for nowhere in the high schools of the country has that problem been solved.

“There is another form of organization commonly associated with high school activities for which the high school management is in no wise responsible and over which it claims no jurisdiction. It is the social and club dances managed entirely outside of the schools and chaperoned or patronized by people not connected officially with the schools. These purely social activities are the most time-consuming and costly of all. Many of these formal and informal

functions occur every week in the long dancing season, and because they are patronized by boys and girls of high school age are mistakenly called high school functions. Many parents are deceived into the belief that the schools are sponsoring these club dances. For these the schools assume no responsibility and should not be blamed.”

THE JANITOR—HIS RELATION TO THE SCHOOL

A few months ago the vice-president of a large manufacturing establishment invited me to accompany him and the president on a trip to their factories. Having heard that the president of the company was a self-made man, I was anxious to learn something about his plan of business administration.

When we reached the office of the first plant, I was impressed with the cordial greeting the president gave to *all* the employees. Their attitude toward him was equally cordial. I recognized one of the clerks, who was a former school pupil, and made use of the acquaintance to ask some questions concerning the management of the factory. He said, "We feel like a family here. Mr. ——— gets everyone from the errand boy to the manager to take a personal interest in the business." As I went about the big establishment with one of the workmen, I was impressed with the truthfulness of the statement.

That evening when I was conversing with the president, I mentioned the fine coöperative spirit

that I had noticed among his men. He said in reply, "I learned a long time ago as a day worker that in order to get the largest returns from your men, you must treat them all well and feed them well. Some managers forget, in these days of keen competition, that the lowest salaried employees are often the persons who make a business a success or a failure." I thought how simple was his formula of success, yet how few possess the inspirational power of leadership to follow it successfully. The same principle applies equally well to the school business.

I shall never forget the August morning that I reported at one school building to begin my duties as superintendent. I had not seen the janitor, and proceeded to air the office, dust the chairs and desk, and get the place in readiness for work. The noise attracted the attention of the janitor, who finally appeared at the door, and after giving me a cold, casual inspection, introduced himself by saying, "I am the janitor," and left the room before I could engage him in conversation. I had heard of him before—how he considered the superintendent nothing more than a boss whom he must endure. It was no surprise to me, therefore, when he left the room without waiting to become acquainted or offering to assist in the house cleaning. Later he

brought to the office some mail that had been accumulating during the summer. I thanked him and asked him to be seated. We talked over a few matters of interest and then made a trip through the building. I carefully avoided saying anything about the janitor's duties. Before leaving that afternoon, he met me in the lower hall and said it was not customary to keep the office cleaned during the summer, but if I intended to be at the building again before the school opened, he would sweep it out. I told him that I had a few things that I should like to do during the two weeks' interval before the opening of school, and would probably be at the building daily, but I could easily look after the cleaning of the office during that time. He looked at me with some astonishment. I don't know whether it was due to the statement that I expected to have something to do at the building for two weeks before school opened, or because I was willing to clean the room. He said nothing and, with a "good evening," we parted at the end of the first day—with the question of *coöperation* or *no coöperation* somewhat unsettled in the janitor's mind.

When I reported for work the next morning the office had been thoroughly cleaned, which I considered quite a victory. As the janitor did

not make his appearance during the forenoon, I went in search of him to inquire about some record books. He then proceeded to tell me what he thought of the teachers and superintendents in general and how I would do well if I could find anything, and showed me a closet in a teacher's room that was filled with a pile of books, supplies, and record sheets. I listened to what he had to say, and then suggested that it might be well if we put some shelves in the closets, and arranged all the books and supplies in an orderly manner before the teachers reported for work. I told him I was interested in what the closets contained, and if he would build some shelves, I would do the rest. He was sure that the shelves would do no good, and that his time and mine would be wasted. We said nothing more about it at that time, but the next day I started on a closet-cleaning crusade. I do not know when I have received greater value for the time spent. Two days of work gave me an educational and business insight into the school that was invaluable. I learned the courses of study and the texts that were used in all of the grades.

After three days' delay, the janitor decided that I had done a fairly good job, and that he would put in the shelves. I gave him some assistance and the books and supplies were listed, recorded,

and put into place. This work was appreciated by the teachers, even though we had entered their private domain, and, I dare say, gave them a feeling that good housekeeping would be expected throughout the year.

The janitor had now learned to know me fairly well. He found that we could work together, and by the time that school opened we were quite friendly. I was amused some months later when a teacher told me of the account the janitor had given her and the other teachers at the opening of school, of the new superintendent.

When I reported at the end of the year the splendid services the janitor had rendered, the members of the board were so well pleased with the change in "Rosy" that they raised his salary for the ensuing year. I am not sure but that the raise in salary pleased me more than it did him.

The help that I received from this janitor throughout the year is no exception to the general rule. I do not wish to give the impression, however, that all the janitors with whom I have worked have been efficient, but I do wish to say that I have received from each of them a much greater degree of coöperation when I caused him to feel that I was his *co-worker* and not his boss.

HOW THE PRINCIPAL CAN HELP THE TEACHER

The principals of our city schools have for two years been carrying on a series of monthly evening meetings which have proved to be highly interesting and instructive. The topics chosen have been along lines that directly affected the work they are doing.

One of the meetings was devoted to the subject "How the Principal Can Help the Teacher." The topic was assigned to two principals, who prepared questionnaires which were sent to all the teachers in the city. The questions asked were along three lines: (1) What can the principal do to help the teacher in a professional way? (2) What can the principal do to help the teacher in an administrative way? (3) What can the principal do in making his personal relationship to the teacher more effective?

Replies were received from about fifty per cent of the teachers and were classified as follows. Percentages indicate the number of teachers giving the replies which they follow:

I. In a professional way.

1. Assistance with the exceptional child, 37%.
2. Interpretation of the course of study, 29%.
3. As a professional leader, 20%.
 - a. The recommendation of good professional literature, 18%.
 - b. Sound advice, 11%.
 - c. Assistance by teaching, 6%.

II. In an administrative way.

1. Furnishing supplies and equipment, 50%.
2. Definite directions, 28%.
3. Distribution of building load, 13%.
4. Regime so planned that interruption of classroom instruction is minimized, 9%.
5. Management of halls, basements, and playgrounds, and of difficult disciplinary cases, 12%.
6. Teachers' meetings, 5%.

III. In personal relationships.

1. The higher human qualities, 60%.
2. Constructive criticism, 16%.
3. Poise, 7%.
4. Helping teachers in self-analysis and mannerisms, 1%.

I shall discuss briefly some of the main suggestions made by the teachers.

I. How the principal can help the teacher in a professional way.

a. *Assistance with the exceptional child.* In these replies it will be noted that thirty-seven per cent of the teachers advocated assistance with the exceptional child. This gives further emphasis to the need of greater attention being given to the classification of pupils in the public schools. The use of tests and measurements has demonstrated the wide range of abilities that can usually be found in different pupils of the same grade. The teacher with from thirty-five to forty-five pupils must handle the work of her room more or less in groups, which often fails to reach the retarded or the accelerated pupil. Too often the teacher through her efforts to give extra assistance needed by the backward pupils gives them a disproportionate amount of time. The entire class suffers from such a procedure. It is unfair to the ninety per cent of pupils of average ability to have one fourth of the teacher's time given to the other ten per cent of the pupils in the room.

How to care for the special pupil is a difficult problem. No plan thus far advanced seems to meet it entirely. The ungraded room with an auxiliary teacher has proved to be fairly satisfactory in schools sufficiently large to justify such an arrangement. The principal in the smaller school as well as in the larger must give

greater attention to the use of intelligence tests as an aid in classifying the pupils so that they can be better graded according to their ability. No teacher should be required to keep a pupil in her room indefinitely who is not mentally able to do the work or who is a constant disturber. The "ninety and nine" who "can do" are more important to save than the one lost sheep who may never be able "to do" if saved.

b. *Interpretation of the course of study.* Twenty-nine per cent of the teachers called attention to the need of greater assistance in interpreting the course of study. I am not surprised to get this expression from the teachers, as they are sometimes given at the opening of the term a new course of study with little or no explanation of the plan back of it or how it is to be administered. I question if any course of study entirely new in content should be put into operation until the teachers have had at least a semester's time to study it thoroughly and get explanations from those who have been instrumental in working it out.

A good illustration of the difficulty in getting satisfactory results from plans new to the teachers has been demonstrated by some of the results obtained with the problem and project methods. It is very easy for a supervisor to pick out some

good problems and illustrate them before the teachers and thus leave the impression that all topics can be handled in a similar manner. The teacher goes back to her classroom and attempts to follow the directions given. Some of the teachers have gone so far as to attempt to make every lesson in geography or history a problem lesson regardless of the nature of the topics to be covered or the reference material or textbook assistance that is available. The results from such a procedure are certain to lead to a poorly connected, piecemeal knowledge by the pupil of the subject as a whole. A semester of practical study of the problem method for any given subject before introducing it would give the teachers, and I dare say the supervisors, a better knowledge of what can reasonably be expected to be accomplished. It is this failure to be able to reach that visionary goal that discourages teachers and causes them to lose confidence in many methods that are excellent in themselves if they are used with moderation and sense.

After a course of study has been in operation for a few months it is well to ask some of the teachers who have been the most successful in getting satisfactory results to explain what they have done and how they have done it. Small groups can then discuss such a report with much

profit to all. I have never experienced any difficulty in getting large attendance at a teachers' meeting if the program provided concrete help for the group in the work they were doing. This is indeed a rich field for the principal to cultivate.

Supplementary books are often purchased and sent to the teachers as a means of interpretation of a subject. They, too, need explanation and discussion.

c. *As a professional leader.* The desire for professional leadership is coupled with the need of interpretation of the course of study. There is probably no more damaging contribution to the teaching profession than the presence now and then of school executives who give but little, if any, of their time to the professional inspiration of the teacher. The teachers in a building with such a principal in charge soon lose their spirit of wanting to serve and become a part of a routine business organization. The lack of holding power of such a school is soon apparent.

Some principals and department heads feel that they make a sufficient contribution professionally when they say to a new teacher, "I am glad you are to be with us. If you have any trouble, come and see me." This is one of the best invitations one could possibly give to

get a teacher to remain away. The best evidence that a principal can show that he wishes to help the teacher is really to help her, and, best of all, to find means to help her without being asked.

Not long ago a teacher who wished a transfer came to see me. He said, "I have been in —— building for five years, during which time I cannot recall having received any professional suggestion from the head of the department. He sees that I have ample supplies and textbooks, but that is merely routine work. What I need is to be encouraged and shown how I can grow." I wonder how many teachers have had a similar experience.

Two years ago I visited an algebra teacher who happened to be assigned to a portable building. He had five classes daily in the same subject. I had known this teacher for a number of years and had regarded him as an average instructor. On this visit I said, "You are out here by yourself and I would like to see what kind of record your pupils can make at the end of the year in the competitive tests which will be given to the algebra pupils in all the city high schools." His face brightened and he said, "All right, I welcome the invitation." Six months later the test was given and his five classes of

pupils made more A and B grades than all the algebra pupils combined in any other one building of the city. To-day, this teacher is easily one of our best instructors in mathematics, and he has recently prepared suggestions as to the teaching of mathematics by the supervised study method which have proved to be of great assistance to the other teachers. He simply caught the spirit; his pupils also caught it, and the results were assured. It did not require professional suggestion to arouse this teacher, but rather a real chance of recognition to show what he could do.

II. In an administrative way.

a. *Furnishing supplies and equipment.* One half of the teachers have apparently suffered from the delay that so often occurs when school material is not ready when it is needed. Sometimes conditions arise due to the shifting of pupils or other unforeseen difficulties which make a delay in the furnishing of supplies and equipment unavoidable. In the large majority of cases, however, there is no excuse for the delay other than "Order too late," "Board held up requisitions for investigation," "Copy of outlines not ready to be printed," etc.

No efficient business establishment would

make a practice of permitting highly paid help to remain idle a part of the time waiting for necessary material. In the schools the loss is much greater than in business because it affects the work of the pupils, who form bad habits early in the semester which are hard to correct later on.

Some principals make a practice of keeping their stock rooms in perfect order. Pupils often assist in this work. This makes it possible to keep a close check on where material can be found and how soon the supply will be exhausted. Such a spirit of order is contagious and teachers and pupils are unconsciously encouraged to give greater attention to the proper use of school material. Thousands of dollars are saved annually in some school systems having free textbooks and supplies by the careful checking and transferring of the supplies. We must not forget that some of the most valuable lessons for the girls and boys come from experiences gained in other avenues than those learned from textbooks.

b. *Definite directions.* The lack of a well-defined plan of administration is called to the attention of the principal by one third of the teaching force. It is sometimes astonishing to note how little some of us practice what we

preach to the pupils and the teachers about the need of being punctual and definite in the work to be done.

Not long ago, a questionnaire was sent to the teachers of the high schools asking for suggestions for the handling of school activities. One of the outstanding replies was—"make a definite schedule for activity needs and assemblies." One teacher stated it as follows: "I will plan my work with the classes for tomorrow with the expectation of having a full period for its recitation and development. On the following day, without a moment's notice, the bell is likely to ring for an assembly which will mean a shortening of all the forenoon periods about one half. My plan of work for the day is practically ruined and the worth of the period to the class is lost." While it is not always possible to foretell the time of an assembly or school meeting, it is generally known by the principal a day or more in advance. A knowledge of the schedule of such meetings on the part of all the teachers a month in advance would often save much confusion and embarrassment. Rules covering tardiness, the issuance of report cards, school discipline, and general building routine should be definitely understood by all. Much of the friction between teachers often

arises from lack of well-understood building rules or of enforcement of rules that have been made.

III. In personal relationships.

a. *The higher human qualities.* The last item of the three main suggestions by the teachers was the subject of the greatest unanimity of opinion.

The human element is one of the greatest prerequisites to successful leadership. Time and again I have heard teachers say, "I do not want to ask Mr. ——. May I take the matter up with Mr. ——, for he is much more approachable?" The irate parent is usually quickly calmed when he is met with a feeling of friendly welcome that puts him at ease. It is hard for the majority of people to tell their troubles to anyone, much more so to tell them to a superior in authority who has an outward coat of formality that is difficult to penetrate.

Too much of the principal's time is often given to looking for the difficulties that arise in the administration of a school with a view to checking them. This naturally gives the teacher the impression that such a principal is always looking for trouble, and he is not, as a rule, a welcome visitor. The principal should endeavor to find something the teacher is doing that is worth

while and to give it the proper recognition. No principal, however, can see what to commend unless he keeps closely in touch at all times with the work the teachers are doing. Idle flattery is far worse than no praise at all.

The kind word or a pleasant "good morning" sincerely spoken by the teacher has always meant much to me. Why should not a similar expression on the part of the principal be equally refreshing to her? It is one of the biggest dividend-paying investments a principal can make. Try it!

THE SCHOOL AND THE COMMUNITY

Never before in the history of America has the public school been such an important factor in the life of the child. In fact, to some extent it has become too great a factor and the home has permitted or even forced the school to take over certain responsibilities that cannot well be delegated.

The high school enrollment is gaining at a tremendous pace and with the rapid growth comes the problem of greater diversity of student ability to serve. Twenty years ago the best of the students in the elementary schools continued their education in the high school. This made a much simpler problem in the providing of courses of study and equipment. To-day, however, many of the children who enter the high schools are able to pursue only such subjects as will fit them for industrial or commercial occupations. Unless a reasonable amount of such work is provided, these pupils soon drop out of school and add to the large army of untrained workers.

The adjusting of boys and girls to proper vocations is one of the big problems confronting the home and the school. The patron often fails

to understand what the school has to offer and the pupil, with little or no definite knowledge as to what he is best fitted to do, struggles along hoping that through the aid of the school he may find himself. In fact, this country's future depends to a considerable degree upon the educational adjustment that can be made for its boys and girls during the upper grade and high school period of their lives. It is no wonder, then, that vocational guidance departments, trade schools, part-time schools, and continuation schools have come into prominence during the last decade.

One of the first things to be done in any community is to study the industrial and commercial conditions in that locality and then attempt to offer such special subjects as the district can afford. The students must be encouraged to learn what the requirements are for certain vocations. Some schools have provided special courses of study along vocational lines, while others use student club organizations as a means of giving information to the pupils.

A good example of the club organization was worked out recently in one of our high schools. The eight hundred high school boys in attendance were divided into three groups. One group consisted of those interested in the study of opportunities offered by the different professions;

the second group, those interested in commercial work; and the third group, those who wished to enter the industrial and engineering field. One of these groups met each week on Tuesday morning, forty-five minutes before the opening of school. An outside speaker, actually engaged in one of the vocations, would address the meeting and answer questions. Special provision was made to see that the speaker gave the information needed, and he was asked to answer the following questions:

1. How did you happen to enter the profession?
2. What are the advantages that you have experienced in your profession?
3. What are the disadvantages that you have experienced in your profession?
4. What is the remuneration in your profession?
5. If you were to attend high school again, to what subjects would you give special attention in order to make yourself better fitted for your profession?

The interest that was created by these meetings and the value of the work accomplished went beyond the expectations of the principal. Many of the pupils changed their programs for the succeeding term so that they might select subjects that would fit them better for the vocations they expected to follow. Other pupils

stated that it was through what they had learned at the meetings they had decided to change the vocation they had previously had in mind.

Many of the student difficulties are due to the unfamiliarity of the parent with what the school has to offer. I recall one instance in which a gentleman called at the office and openly criticized the high school for not offering work whereby his daughter could learn something that would be useful to her in earning a living. I listened to his complaint, and then asked him if he would spend five minutes in going about the building with me. He refused at first to do so but finally consented to my request. I took him to the sewing rooms, the cooking rooms, the art rooms, and finally to the typewriting and office-practice rooms. He was astonished to see that the very subjects he was criticizing the schools for not offering were available at any time for his daughter if she wished to take them. He apologized for his attack on the school and assured me that henceforth he would give attention to the work his daughter pursued in school.

A few years ago the mayor of the city was invited to address the pupils at an assembly. At the conclusion of the program I asked him to spend a few minutes viewing the work offered in the school. After some hesitation he accepted

the invitation, and before he left the building he said, "I am ashamed to say it, but I have lived in this city for twenty years and this is the first time that I have had any idea of the work that our high schools are offering. I feel very much better prepared now to champion the cause of education."

It is easy for some patrons to feel that a high school education is useless because now and then they see a boy or girl fail in a position who had previously had some high school training. They forget that the high school of to-day is called upon to serve a much more diversified group of pupils than ever before, and it is not always able to determine in every case just the type of work that the boy or girl needs in order to make a success in life.

The schools are making strenuous efforts to give each individual pupil a chance to adjust himself to a vocation. The junior high school organization, classification of pupils according to ability, tests and measurements, and vocational guidance are all means to this end. The schoolmaster of tomorrow must realize that there is much good in the education of the past, but that the changing conditions in our social and industrial life must be met with similar readjustments in the program of education.



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